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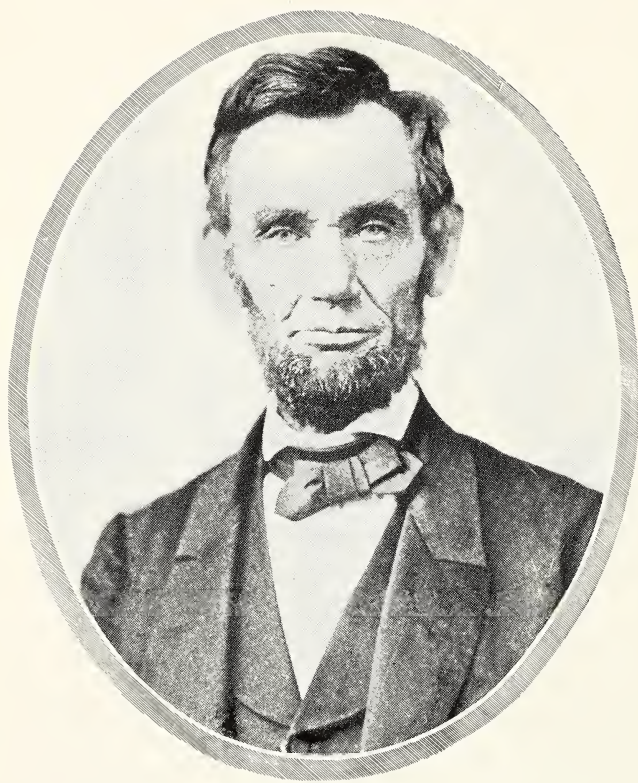
IN THE HOUSE WHERE  
ABRAHAM LINCOLN DIED

To Hon David Fish  
with regards of  
Joseph Benjamin Akleof



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IN THE HOUSE  
WHERE ABRAHAM LINCOLN DIED

AND THE SIXTY-TWO YEARS' QUEST FOR  
MEMENTOES OF THE GREAT  
EMANCIPATOR

By  
AARON HARDY ULM

BEING A REPRINT BY JOSEPH BENJAMIN OAKLEAF OF THE ARTI-  
CLE, SO ENTITLED, APPEARING IN THE FEBRUARY 11, 1922,  
NUMBER OF "THE DEARBORN INDEPENDENT"



OSBORN H. OLDROYD

Who, when keeper of a news stand in Mt.  
Vernon, Ohio, in 1860, began collecting  
relics of his great hero, Abraham Lincoln,  
and has given nearly all his time  
since to the task.

## Foreword

I AM a subscriber to *The Dearborn Independent*, from which the following article was reprinted. As a collector of Lincolniana, and a friend of Mr. Oldroyd, I wanted to do something for him and I thought this was the best way of showing him a courtesy and at the same time giving Mr. Ulm, the author, credit for an interesting article on Abraham Lincoln.

I wrote to the editor of the paper, suggesting that he have the article published in pamphlet form, but I was informed that it would not be convenient for him to do so, but he was willing to allow me to have the reprint made, and he loaned me the cuts for the purpose.

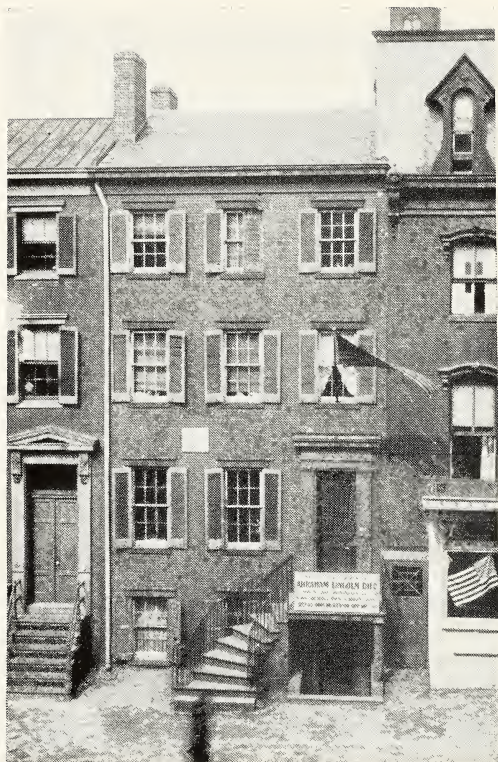
I would like to see every member of Congress get a copy of this reprint, for the Government should buy the Oldroyd collection and make it a Government institution and place it with other mementoes of the great Emancipator. If Mr. Oldroyd should decide to sell his collection at auction, I fully believe he could realize twice as much as he would be willing to sell the collection for to the Government. To Mr. Oldroyd it has been a labor of love, and all those who revere the name of Abraham Lincoln are under obligations to Mr. Oldroyd.

The readers of *The Dearborn Independent* are often happily surprised by articles such as this one, or other suggestions appearing within the pages of "America's Foremost Weekly." The last page, being items under the heading "Briefly Told," is alone worth the subscription price, and Mr. Ford is to be congratulated in providing for the home such a clean weekly newspaper.

JOSEPH BENJAMIN OAKLEAF.

*Moline, Illinois, October, 1922.*





The house in which Lincoln died.  
Its use is now given free for the Oldroyd  
collection of Lincolniana.



## IN THE HOUSE WHERE ABRAHAM LINCOLN DIED

IN 1860 a lad of 19 ran a little news stand in his native town, Mount Vernon, Ohio. When he wasn't busy selling papers and copies of the few magazines then published, he collected bugs and plants and anything curious that seemed worth putting away. One day he found in the bundle of newspapers and periodicals which came to him from Pittsburgh, a paper-covered pamphlet, entitled, in big, flamboyant type, "The Life, Speeches and Public Service of Abraham Lincoln." It was a sample copy, it being the policy of the distributors to put into the bundle specimens of anything new which came along, the understanding being that if the sample was not sold, it could be returned.

Instead of offering the pamphlet for sale, the young news stand proprietor read it. And when he read it, he decided to neither sell nor return it to the distributors. For, though a cheap campaign document, it caused him to vision the immortality that was to come to its subject. He resolved to make it the first item of a collection of material having to do with Abraham Lincoln, who was then making his first campaign for the presidency. He points it out to you now—displayed prominently among 4,000 to 5,000 items collected during 62 years devoted almost wholly



The cabin where Lincoln bade his stepmother goodbye before leaving for Washington to become President.

to the gathering and preserving of relics of the Great Emancipator.

The young man's name was Osborn H. Oldroyd. He is now in his 81st year, but is as active as a healthy man of 60, and he still would gladly walk 10 miles any day to get some little object that bears intimately or importantly on the life of his hero, the first of our martyr-Presidents.

His collection of Lincolniana is the greatest in existence, and some say it is the greatest collection of relics of one man ever gathered anywhere at any time. In it you find objects used by or associated with Lincoln at every period of his life—clothes that he wore, the Bible from which his mother read to him and on the flyleaf of which he wrote his name when he was not more than nine years old, letters penned by him, chairs and other furniture used by Lincoln in his home, photographs, prints and newspaper clippings innumerable. Much of the collection has more than mere association value; it could be of great assistance to historical accuracy.

It is housed in the building on 10th street, Washington, where in the early morning of April 15, 1865, Abraham Lincoln died from the wound inflicted by John Wilkes Booth in a box at Ford's Theater across the street on the evening before. It has been there for nearly 30 years, the house being owned and furnished free by the government for the use of the collection, which is still the private property of Mr. Old-





A partial view of the thousands of mementoes and relics of Abraham Lincoln collected by Osborn H. Oldroyd.

royd. A vagrant spark, a carelessly-tossed cigaret or cigar stub, an exposed electric wire might at any time mean the destruction of the collection and the building which, of course, is itself a sacred bit of Lincolniana.

Mr. Oldroyd takes you into a back room and points out, as it hangs in a weather-worn display case, the first of his Lincoln relics, the old campaign book of the '60's. It sold then for 25 cents; a first edition copy of it now probably is worth hundreds of dollars. It has an important secondary value, for it was the first book written by William Dean Howells, who, long before his death which occurred only a short time ago, was the recognized dean of American letters.

Mr. Oldroyd entered the Civil War, at its beginning, as an enlisted man in the 20th Ohio Regiment and served throughout the conflict. One day, near the close of his army service, his regiment was halted while on the march near Murfreesboro, Tennessee. The commander read a message which told of Booth's assault. The troops were taken back to camp, where three bulletins were posted in the order of their arrival. One told of the attack, the other of Lincoln's serious condition and the last of the President's death.

"I asked the adjutant if I couldn't have those bulletins after they were no longer needed for display," says Mr. Oldroyd.

"Make and post duplicates and you can have 'em now," the officer replied.





The old Ford Theater, where Lincoln was shot,  
as reconstructed.



They mark the after-war resumption of Mr. Oldroyd's collecting. Returning home, he held several state positions at different times during 10 or 12 years, but devoted all his spare time to hunting and all his spare dollars to buying, when buying was necessary, relics of his hero.

He became so entranced with his subject that he decided to make its pursuit a life-work. He moved to Springfield, Illinois, and rented the old Lincoln home and lived in it for 20 years or more, and searched all the country around there for mementoes of Lincoln.

The Lincolns sold their household goods when they moved from Springfield to Washington, but Mr. Oldroyd managed to recover several of the items. They are on display in the Washington house. There is an old-style horsehair sofa, several chairs and tables and the cooking stove on which Mrs. Lincoln cooked the last meal she served her husband in their old home, and Lincoln's old Springfield office chair and desk.

A huge cradle, the like of which you never see now, was recovered also and is now in the Oldroyd collection. In it the Lincoln children when infants were rocked.

In the collection there is a fence rail which was split by Lincoln when a boy. Its authenticity was attested by John Hanks, the first cousin, who taught Lincoln to read. There are numerous other curious relics of like kind, perhaps the most interesting of which is a

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The bill of the play Lincoln was witnessing when  
he received his mortal wound.

pass through the Union lines in Virginia—or rather a statement written on a White House card to the effect that no pass was needed—in Lincoln's handwriting and bearing his signature. It was written the evening before he was slain. It is the last bit of writing that survived the martyred President. It, with one of the very few surviving locks of hair, was owned by a man who was an usher at the White House at the time of Lincoln's death. For 14 years Mr. Oldroyd tried to buy the two relics, but the owner refused to sell at any price. Then the owner died and the widow also refused to sell. After a long illness, the widow died and her sister sold the relics to procure money with which to pay the widow's doctor bills and funeral expenses. It required 20 years' pursuit and finally a substantial sum of money to obtain the two relics.

But mere curios make up only a part of the collection. It contains more prints and pictures of and having to do with Lincoln than perhaps are in any other place, though there are other good collections of those items alone. Mr. Oldroyd has a complete set of all the cartoons published by London *Punch* on Lincoln. They tell the story of Lincoln's career in the White House from the British viewpoint and give splendid insight into the British attitude toward several international questions which arose during the Civil War between the two countries. He also has a large collection of cartoons of Lincoln that appeared

in American publications. Most of them are amusing and some even are vicious; all show that the Great Emancipator did not escape the satire and the humor of the cartoonists of his day. He also has a vast collection of clippings taken from newspapers published as far back as the time of the Lincoln-Douglas debates, as well as from the current publications during Lincoln's campaign for the presidency, and at the time of his assassination and the trial of those involved in his murder. He has more than 100 pictures having to do with the assassination and funeral, nearly 50 photographs of Booth, the assassin, and the only complete set of photographs of all those convicted of conspiring with the actor. Among his clippings there are more than 200 complete, or reports of, sermons delivered at the time of his death, on Lincoln's life and character, and 227 autographed tributes and reminiscences of famous men and women. The collection contains more than 20 statuettes, busts and life and death masks of the Civil War President, nearly 30 medallions and nearly 200 political and memorial medals struck in his honor. He also has more than 100 different photographs of Lincoln, taken at different periods.

Except for the removal of the furniture and the presence of many mementoes of the occurrence, the room in which Lincoln died stands now very much as it was at the time of his death. Even the same paper, now blanched and broken, is on the wall,

and the same wide pine boards constitute the floor.

It would seem that the fates wanted the Great Emancipator to die amid humble surroundings, as were those of his infancy and youth, for the house wherein he breathed his last was not an imposing structure, even in the '60's. It is a three-storied, narrow, brick building. When the dying President was taken there, it was a lodging house, and the room to which he was carried was among the humblest in the dwelling. It is a narrow room, at the end of the first-floor hall; it was taken probably because of its convenience.

Only two who were present at the President's death are alive. One is the son, Robert T. Lincoln, and the other Dr. Leale, who lives in New York.

The theater building, in mostly reconstructed form, still stands and is the property of the government.

For many years Congress seems to have intended to take over the Oldroyd collection of Lincolniana and make provision for preserving it and the historic building which houses it. The building was occupied by Mr. Oldroyd in 1893. Prior to that year, the collection was on display at Springfield, in the old Lincoln home, which Mr. Oldroyd induced Robert T. Lincoln to give to the state.

After the Springfield place came under the control of the state, Mr. Oldroyd was made its superintendent, but a change in the governorship caused him to



lose his place. He was preparing to auction off his collection when the Washington Memorial Association asked him to take it to the National Capital. The house in which Lincoln died was rented for it, but for long admission fees failed to provide expenses. Congress bought the house and for more than 15 years has given it rent free to Mr. Oldroyd for his collection. A sign kept posted in the museum says that whenever Congress or others provide means for meeting the expenses of conducting the place, admission will be free.

"I hope Congress will take over the collection and let it become government property," Mr. Oldroyd declared. "The government can have the collection at whatever price it wants to pay. I have no hope of getting as much from the government as I could get by selling the collection piecemeal, but I want the collection to stay in Washington and preferably in this building, which should be safeguarded by being fireproofed. These things should be here where any one might come and see them and at the same time see where the great man died.

"Such relics as these vitalize the memory of him who was associated with them. They prove that the hero was a human being and not a mere copper-plate image which idealized persons long dead tend to become in the average mind."









